

Amendments to the Claims:

The following listing of claims will replace all prior versions, and listings, of claims in the application:

1. (Currently Amended) A piercing device comprising:
 - a first shaft having a first axis;
 - a second shaft having a second axis, the second axis being eccentrically arranged relative to the first axis;
 - an outer tube rotatably supported on the first shaft so that the outer tube can be driven for rotation;
 - a plurality of needle support members that are independently rotatably supported on the second shaft and successively arranged along the second axis;
 - a plurality of piercing needles ~~rotatably~~ arranged in a circumferential direction and supported on the second shaft via the needle support members, said plurality of piercing needles being spaced from each other in a circumferential direction, projecting radially outwards, and being ~~independently rotatable about the second axis with respect to each other,~~ each movable toward and away from other piercing needles in the circumferential direction, the piercing needles each being extendable and retractable relative to an outer surface of the outer tube via holes formed in the outer tube; and
 - a needle restraining member rotatably supported on the second shaft, for transmitting torque to the piercing needles when driven for rotation.
2. (Previously Presented) The piercing device according to claim 1, wherein the outer tube and the needle support members are connected to a driving means for driving them at a constant speed.
3. (Previously Presented) The piercing device according to claim 1, wherein a rotating radius of the outer surface of the outer tube and a rotating radius of a tip end of the

plurality of piercing needles are the same with respect to each other, and an amount of eccentricity of the first and second shafts is within a range of 10-15 mm.

4. (Previously Presented) The piercing device according to claim 2, wherein a rotating radius of the outer surface of the outer tube and a rotating radius of a tip end of the plurality of piercing needles are the same with respect to each other, and an amount of eccentricity of the first and second shafts is within a range of 10-15 mm.